USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, 200 N. High Street, Room 522, Columbus, Ohio 43215 (614) 255-2472 Winter 2003

State Conservationist
Kevin Brown

As we go forward in the new calendar year, I would like us all to reflect on the accomplishments of 2002. We had a great year for conservation in Ohio. We lead the nation in providing services to our customers, getting conservation on the ground, and meeting the guidelines of the 2002 Farm Bill.

During our awards recognition conference in December, I was energized by the positive attitudes, camaraderie, and team spirit. The "Class of '72" showed true class and motivation as they accepted their 30-year recognition for a job well done. We all enjoy what we do and it shows.

What will 2003 bring? Truthfully, tight budgets and more conservation program demands. However, there is a light at the end of the tunnel. We have survived tougher times and have become stronger. Private lands conservation is an admirable career, and I appreciate your efforts.

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NRCS Chief Bruce Knight Visits Ohio

By Jeff Raifsnider, NRCS

NRCS Chief Bruce Knight spoke about the 2002 Farm Bill and its impact on conservation at the joint annual meeting of the Ohio Corn Growers Association and the Ohio Soybean Association in Plain City on December 12, 2002. His speech was titled "The Farm Bill and How to Make It Work." Chief Knight also visited the USDA-NRCS State Office in Columbus after the meeting in Plain City.

Chief Knight complimented Ohio for its national leadership.

At the joint association meeting, Chief Knight complimented Ohio for its role in national leadership of corn and soybean growers and its role as a leader in the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD). Then he spoke about the significant gains in conservation opportunities provided by the new Farm Bill.

Knight said, "This is ushering in a Golden Age of Conservation. This is the largest commitment ever to conservation. The new Farm Bill provides a portfolio of conservation programs that are significant for working farmland and grassland."

The Chief discussed funding available for many of the Farm Bill programs including the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), and the Conservation Security Program (CSP).

He said, "The CSP is one program that I am very interested in because it has the potential for providing assistance to farmers for leading edge conservation. It is much more important that we do CSP right, than do it quickly."

Knight spoke about the great challenge that NRCS and its partners face in implementing the conservation provisions of the new Farm Bill.

He said, "Today we have a new challenge in front of us, a backlog of pending applications. There's more to implementing the Farm Bill than taking applications. First, we need to get the word out about the Farm Bill. We have already reached those who have tuned into our traditional methods. We need outreach to every segment of the farm community. Second, we need to focus more on conservation goals than on taking applications. Our strategy is to put as much conservation on the ground as quickly, as wisely, and as efficiently as possible. Third, we need to get as much conservation applied as possible. We will use incentives to do that."

The Chief also mentioned the importance of "leveraging Federal dollars." He said, "The Federal government and farmers can get the most conservation done when funding comes from different sources." Knight spoke about locally led conservation and the unique role that NRCS has in conservation implementation due to its direct contact with local leadership and resource needs. He also said that NRCS is working to keep the Farm Bill program rules as simple as possible.

"The key to reaching local and national goals is to keep discussions at the local level."

Knight said, "The key to reaching local and national goals is to keep discussions at the local level. We're doing everything that we can to keep the rules lean and local. We are simplifying the rules. NRCS is a locally led Federal agency. This is a huge difference between NRCS and other Federal agencies."

The Chief spoke about conservation opportunities in the new Farm Bill

Chief Knight (l) and NRCS State Conservationist Kevin Brown (r) fielded questions from employees at the NRCS State Office.

The Chief's closing statement called for a focus on meeting conservation goals through conservation partnerships. He said, "We've had about six months under our belt to implement the Farm Bill and to making this what I call the 'Golden Age of Conservation'. We need to focus more on overall conservation goals rather than on programs. After all, you have an interest in managing the land, not in participating in programs. The more conservation partners we have, the more conservation we will get on the land. I look forward to working with you all and to making this the new Golden Age of Conservation."

Chief Knight recently served for seven years as Vice President of Public Policy for the National Corn Growers Association's (NCGA) Washington D.C. office. The NCGA is a producer-directed, trade association that represents U.S. corn growers.

NRCS State Conservationist Kevin Brown wishes to commend Chief Knight for making the time in his busy schedule for not only visiting with Ohio's NRCS employees, but also for really listening to the employees and for providing thoughtful answers to their questions. Kevin said, "The Chief could easily have hopped onto a 1:30 p.m. flight and flown out of here. Rather than doing that, he spoke with all of the employees in a special meeting at the State Office. He stayed with us in that meeting until he had answered all of our questions and concerns. At one point when I reminded the Chief that he had a flight to catch, the Chief told me to take a seat and wait until everyone had a chance to be heard. He didn't get on a plane until 7:30 p.m."

Kevin commended Chief Knight for making time to not only visit with Ohio's NRCS employees, but also for really listening to the employees and for providing thoughtful answers to their questions.

We need to focus more on overall conservation goals rather than on programs.

As the chief prepared to depart he said, "I look forward to working with all of you and to making this the new Golden Age of Conservation."

EQIP Educational Funds Empower College To Help Its Community

Article and Photos By
Jeff Raifsnider, NRCS

Bob Hendershot speaks about winter grazing with clinic participants

NRCS Grasslands Management Systems Specialist Bob Hendershot helped lead a grazing clinic at Wilmington College on November 16, 2002, at the college's greatly improved Fife Avenue Farm. The clinic showcased the power of combining EQIP dollars with matching college funds and with community support for a program redesigned to benefit southwestern Ohio. Approximately 30 people attended the rainy Saturday clinic, including members of the community and students and faculty of the college.

Hendershot said, "NRCS has given an educational grant to Wilmington College. It blends in real well with their goal to have an agricultural outreach to the farming community. We are looking at an alternative use for highly erodible, marginal cropland that is utilizing livestock to diversify the farmer's income."

The clinic demonstrated an intensive grazing system that works well in the hilly terrain of southwestern Ohio. Participants experienced watering facilities, heavy use pads, and annually planted forage crops and discussed the utilization of crop residues including corn stalks for fall and winter feed. Wilmington College Director of Agriculture Monte Anderson said, "We couldn't have done this without the EQIP educational funds. Our goal was to establish a demo site for people to see what works and what doesn't. As a faculty, we want this place to be a place where people come to see new and innovative things. Southwest Ohio is seeing an increase in grazing livestock and the land is suitable for it. This provides a way to diversify and to make marginal land productive."

Bob Hendershot(center-left) and Adam Rousch (midcenter) and Monte Anderson (center-right) discuss the characteristics of a good livestock watering system.

A valuable part of the educational program at Wilmington College is practical experience. As students study various farming practices in the classroom, they also get hands-on experience applying those practices on the college farm.

Anderson said, "We take our freshman Crop and Animal Science class and have them all year long. What's going on in the field is what's going on in the classroom. Our students put in about a mile of fence each year. We hope

This heavy use pad enables managers to keep livestock off pastures during wet periods to protect soil and improve hay quality.

to paddock all of our cropland eventually. They palpated cows (checked for pregnancy). They wormed cows and worked with sheep. They combined. They used minimum tillage. They chisel plowed and they planted no till wheat."

Farm Coordinator Adam Rousch coordinates student activities. Rousch has seen several changes on the farm since the college received EQIP educational funds.

Rousch said, "In the last two years, there has been a major change in design and the way we work in three major things: intensive grazing, academics, and safety for students and faculty. The college gives us a budget for the everyday running of the farm. The EQIP educational funds help us to make necessary improvements."

Rousch spoke about the outreach goal of the improved program. He said, "With the ag' program, we're trying to create an intensive grazing niche. We see this as a way to help our community. We want to show people that by putting some money into the resources that you have now, you can make a profit."

Apparently, the agricultural community appreciates the innovative improvements and outreach efforts of Wilmington College's agricultural program. Anderson spoke about the beneficial support the college has received since the project's inception.

He said, "You should have seen this farm three years ago before we started this project. It has changed dramatically. It looks so much better now. We hope it's a source of pride for the students. It now reflects where we are going in production agriculture. We couldn't have done it without community support. The college provided matching funds to the EQIP dollars, plus we have a number of vendors and friends of the college who have joined us to enhance the farm."

Wilmington College Director of Agriculture Monte Anderson said, "We couldn't have done this without the EQIP educational funds."

L to R: Wilmington College senior Nate Conrad, Farm Coordinator Adam Rousch, NRCS Grassland Management Specialist Bob Hendershot, and Wilmington College Director of Agriculture Monte Anderson pose at the Grazing Clinic.

Students Enjoy Hands-On Experience at Wilmington College

By Jeff Raifsnider, NRCS

We interviewed some students at Wilmington College who were attending the Grazing Clinic held at the college farm on November 16, 2002. They expressed things they like about gaining various field experiences through the agricultural program at their college. Justin Armintrout is a freshman majoring in Agronomy. Justin said, "You can see what you are learning about and how it actually works." Freshman Jared Piar is majoring in Agriculture. Jared said, "I learn better by hands-on stuff. I like being outside better than sitting in class taking notes."

Wilmington College students pose at the Grazing Clinic (L to R) Justin Armintrout, Jared Piar, Megan Pratt, and Nick Murphy.
Photo by: Jeff Raifsnider

Sophomore Megan Pratt is majoring in Athletic Training, with a minor in Animal Science. Megan said, "We have sheep at home, but here I get to try something different and work with cows." Freshman Nick Murphy is majoring in Agricultural Production. Nick said, "Out here you get a lot of different jobs. You can learn better if you actually do it." Senior Nate Conrad (photo on page 5), is majoring in Ag Education. Nate spoke about improvements he has seen during his time spent on the college farm. Nate said, "We outgrew the older facility. It was too small for all of the students to get experience and too small for the herd. We built a very modern, working facility where we can learn the most modern way of doing things. This operation is much more efficient and user friendly."

Ohio NRCS Welcomes New Deputy State Conservationist

Joyce Swartzendruber reported for duty on October 20, 2002, as the new Deputy State Conservationist for the Ohio Natural Resources Conservation Service. She held previous positions with NRCS as Assistant State Conservationist in Idaho from 1995 to 2002 and District Conservationist in Fairbanks, Alaska, from 1991. Joyce also held the positions of District Conservationist, Soil Conservationist, and Soil Conservation Technician in her home State of Iowa. She began her conservation career as a technician in the Washington Soil Conservation District with the Iowa Division of Soil Conservation and worked there from 1977 to 1980.

Joyce earned a Bachelor's of Science degree in Agronomy from Iowa State University in 1984. She is a member of the Soil and Water Conservation Society and the National Association of Conservation Districts. Welcome to Ohio, Joyce!

Best Management Practices Field Day

By Chris Rogers, Brown SWCD

On October 12, the Adams, Brown, and Highland Soil and Water Conservation Districts hosted a Best Management Practices field day at Day's Valley Angus Farms and Day Angus Farms. Area residents had the opportunity to view several different conservation practices that have been implemented on these farms over the last four years. In 1998, the Adams, Brown, and Highland Soil and Water Conservation Districts received a grant from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Soil and Water Conservation to promote managed grazing systems.

NRCS Grasslands Management Systems Specialist Bob Hendershot discusses rotational grazing systems at the BMP field day. Photo by: Chris Rogers, Brown SWCD

Adams, Brown, and Highland SWCDs received a grant from the DSWC to promote managed grazing systems.

The field day started off with a stop that demonstrated the use of small round bales in a rotational grazing system. Bob Hendershot, State Grasslands Specialist with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, along with Mark and Carlos Day discussed this system. The tour of the farms continued with stops showing how large round bales can be used in the same manner as the small round bales and the different watering systems that have been implemented and how they can be utilized in any managed grazing system. Tim Wilson, Service Forester with the ODNR Division of Forestry, discussed livestock exclusion from woodland.

Livestock exclusion from streams was also discussed Steve Willson, District Conservationist, talked with the group about the programs available for fencing out streams. The group viewed a grassed waterway that had been constructed to control gully erosion.

The final stop showed a spring development and how it was being utilized to water separate pastures. An example of livestock exclusion from a stream was viewed and temporary watering sources were discussed as well. Matt Adkins and Melody Layford demonstrated for the group how they assisted area high school students with water monitoring. Chris Grooms, field representative for the Southern Ohio Agricultural Community Development Foundation, spoke about the programs that the Foundation has available.

We would like to thank Dr. Mark Day, Carlos and Sue Day, and Joyce Day for allowing us the use of their farms and everyone else who made the field day such a huge success. For information regarding any of the Best Management Practices mentioned, please contact the Brown Soil and Water Conservation District at (937) 378-4424.

Options for Winter Feeding of Livestock

By Jennifer Cripliver, NRCS

Well, the holidays have come and gone, and 2003 is here. This year I am making a resolution that I encourage for everyone. My resolution for this year is to try to "be prepared" for whatever Mother Nature may dish out in 2003. Different farmers will approach this in different ways—taking a sort of "inventory" of things around the farm in need of repair, budgeting money to purchase additional livestock or a necessary piece of equipment, and so on. But, little changes in the management of your operation can also make a positive impact on the farm, without necessarily spending a lot more time and/or money.

Winter grazing of cattle can be a low-cost, low-maintenance alternative to feeding the animals in a drylot. If you have some type of shelter, water, and fence, you can graze cattle and not worry about baling and hauling feed then turning around and hauling manure back out. Winter grazing has been shown to reduce the cost of feed significantly, while meeting the nutritional requirements for beef cows (mid-gestation). The opportunities available depend on things like the climate of the year and the relative mildness of the winter.

January is a good time to graze cattle on cornstalks if they are not already out there, with a supplement of hay, grain, and/or stockpiled forage. Many farms have shorter than usual supplies of supplemental feed this year due to the summer drought. However, there are still ways to keep cattle gaining out in the field. If January is relatively mild, take advantage of tall fescue that grew back a bit with the fall rains. This grass can hold much of its nutritious quality and has been shown to produce up to 1.0 ADG (average daily gain) without supplemental feed, if managed properly. January is also a good time to renovate existing pasture. Legumes such as red clover can be frost-seeded into existing pasture, with good results. Contact your local Soil and Water Conservation District for seeding rates and recommendations.

Winter grazing reduces feed costs.

By February, most of your cornstalk reserves will be just about gone, if not gone completely. At this point, you may want to remove the animals from the field if you are concerned about compacting the soil. You can also do some frost seeding now to improve existing pastures or to increase feed value of small grains.

Existing pastures that are being frost-seeded should be seeded by mid-March. At this time, you can also apply some N fertilizer to your grass pastures for a "boost" that should take you into the spring flush of growth. You should aim to have new pasture or hayland seeded by the end of this month or by mid-April.

Looking ahead, once you've done the work to improve the quality of your pasture, you want to make sure you don't lose your investment by not maintaining the field. To maintain a productive grazing system over the season, it is important to keep in mind a few things:

1. Start grazing on time. Now normally we talk about making sure that the pasture grasses are long enough before grazing to prevent overgrazing and allow the grass enough growth between grazing periods. In the early spring, however, it is important to get out there sooner (when grasses reach 3-4" high) or your animals will never keep up with the growth. If this is early (March/April), try "flash grazing" or moving livestock lightly and at low density through a series of pastures to minimize the damage your animals will do to wet areas.

2. Keep your stocking rates up early. Because there is so much forage growth in the spring, you can run a greater amount of animals on a given area if you are practicing a rotational grazing system. Of course, the numbers will vary, but it is possible to feed a 1,000-lb cow on a half-acre of good quality pasture!
* *Note these numbers will vary greatly as spring turns to summer and growth slows.*

3. Subdivide. Use those pasture areas that are a bit rougher to graze and harvest hay off pasture that is easier to access. This will give you good quality feed now and a small supply of hay early. Those hilly pastures are actually better to graze this time of year than the bottomland pastures because they won't mud-up near as fast.

4. Supplement. If you want to minimize hay feeding in early spring, other options include feed cubes, pelleted wheat mids, soybean hulls, or grain byproducts. You can invest in cubes with high protein and relative feed values (RFV) if hay supplies are short or of low quality to supplement the poor forage present in February-March. These feed cubes cost roughly $350/ton, but you can feed out 4 lbs/day/cow maintaining cows on feed and pasture for only $1.00/day/cow. How does this compare with the cost of feeding hay this time of year? A 1200-lb mature cow, six months pregnant can eat around 20-30lbs of straw or low quality hay. If you can curb that intake a bit by supplementing with pasture, you could save a good deal of money over the course of the winter/early spring. In addition, pasture is higher quality feed than most stored hay and costs less than supplements. So cows can maintain or even increase their body condition over this time (most stored hay is not high enough quality to maintain condition no matter how much the animal takes in).

Winter forage supplements nutritional requirements.

When you introduce (or reintroduce) animals to lush, green pasture after months of feeding stored feed, cornstalks, etc., make sure there is also mineral supplement containing magnesium. This is especially important in grass-dominated pastures and will help prevent grass tetany. You may also want to supplement green pasture with older dry hay to "ease" the animals into grazing and help prevent bloat.

If you are interested in planning ahead to extend your grazing season next year, consider winter annuals. Cereals like rye, wheat, and triticale can produce high quality feed by mid-March. Rye is particularly good after crops like corn because it is very efficient at using N reserves in the soil. It will produce forage in the fall and also early in the spring, as rye begins growing earlier than other forages, allowing some grazing in March. Triticale is another good source of feed. It has rapid growth and can produce up to 5 tons/ac of high protein feed!

If you simply want to increase the quantity and quality of stockpiled pasture for next winter, add 50lbs N/ac to existing fescue fields in mid-August. This can add 1-2 tons/ac of stockpiled forage next year. With this system, it is better to feed some hay or graze annual forages in August and let pastures recover and stockpile for use in the winter, rather than overgraze fields in the summer then end up feeding hay from October to April.

These are just some of the options that are available for making the most out of your grazing system. Each option can produce good results, but to achieve these levels, your soils must have adequate fertility and you must practice good grazing management to obtain the maximum results. Every operation has slightly different needs, so if you are interested in finding out more, please contact your local SWCD office.

Central States Forest Soils Workshop

By Jeff Glanville, NRCS

The 22nd annual Central States Forest Soils Workshop was held October 15-17 in northwest Ohio. Over 130 registered participants from 4 states saw a variety of soils and land uses. Participants included employees from USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service and the U.S. Forest Service; ODNR's Division of Soil and Water Conservation and Division of Forestry; Ohio SWCDs; other State and Federal agencies, colleges and private businesses.

After registering Tuesday afternoon, we were given an introduction to northwest Ohio by some excellent presenters. Much of northwest Ohio is in what was known as the Great Black Swamp, referring to the conditions before drainage carried away much of the surface water. This area is the former lakebed of Lake Erie, when glacial ice blocked drainage to the east. The land is generally very flat. Dunes, beach ridges, and other sandy deposits are on higher parts of the landscape.

The heavy textured soils on this flat landscape were generally poorly drained. Starting around 1850, agricultural drainage and ditches provided a means to remove excess water and grow crops, and the forest was gradually cleared. Today, only a few small forests remain.

Maumee State Forest was the first stop Wednesday morning. Maumee State Forest is the only State forest in northwest Ohio. It is located in the Oak Openings region, which is basically a big sandy area. Soil series in the forest are dominantly Ottokee, Tedrow, and Granby. Here we saw a 50-year-old pine plantation being thinned by low impact equipment. Lab data from the Spinks soils pit here showed fine sand textures from the surface to 60 inches, with clay contents ranging from 1.5 to 3.9 percent.

The next stop was the Lange tree farm. Soil series on this farm are dominantly Ottokee, Spinks, and Granby. Species planted since 1972 include red oak, white oak, Eastern white pine, black walnut, and baldcypress. A windbreak was planted through the Northwest Ohio Field Windbreak Program, with Eastern white pine, American arborvitae, and Norway spruce. Lab data from the Granby soils pit here showed loamy fine sand textures from the surface to 60 inches, with clay contents ranging from 3.9 to 5.7 percent.

After lunch, we saw a riparian buffer installed through the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), and a field windbreak in the adjacent field. Dave Berna, retired Ohio NRCS forester, discussed the benefits of field windbreaks.

The Wednesday afternoon field stop was at the Ridgeville Corners wastewater site. This community in Henry County uses irrigation as a tertiary treatment of wastewater. Twenty-six acres of newly planted trees are irrigated, as well as 7 acres of existing forest. This project was a multiagency effort, with materials or assistance provided by Maumee State Forest, NRCS Maumee Valley Resource Conservation and Development, National Tree Trust, and several local Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Most of this area is on Fulton soils. Lab data from the soils pits here showed dominantly clay textures in the Bt horizons, with clay contents around 65 percent.

Dave Sherry (left) of Fulton SWCD discusses the construction of this "Green tree reservior." Water is ponded during the tree's dormant season and released during the growing season on this Granby soil. Photo by: Jeff Glanville, NRCS

ODNR Soil Scientist Mark Feunser (left top) discusses forest soil properties with participants at the Granby soil pit on the Lange Tree Farm. Photo by: Jeff Glanville, NRCS

The final forest soils field stop was Thursday morning at Goll Woods State Nature Preserve. Goll Woods is an old growth forest where a variety of site conditions enable different forest communities to exist. Here we saw a soil monolith of Lenawee silty clay loam, and we saw the big bur oaks while walking on the nature trail.

We received a fine guided tour through the Sauder Manufacturing plant in Archbold. Sauder makes a variety of residential and institutional furniture. Church pews appeared to be the main product of this particular plant.

This was an outstanding workshop. The food was good, the weather was decent, and the program and presenters were excellent. Thanks again to all who participated.

NRCS – GIS Update

By Sean Browning and Bob Parkinson, NRCS

Ohio NRCS continues its efforts on enterprise-wide GIS implementation. Accomplishments to date include the complete statewide delivery of digital orthophoto county mosaics, more than 234 ArcView 3.2a software installations, completion of the 2002 NRI data collection, and continued implementation of Customer Service Toolkit (CST) and global positioning system (GPS) technology. Ohio NRCS and its partners can be proud of progress made in the implementation of geospatial technologies to enhance the Conservation Partnership and our operations.

Some things to look for in 2003 include: 1) the procurement of Garmin Map 76 GPS units (capable of differential GPS) and digital cameras for each Ohio NRCS area, field, and project office; and 2) complete ArcView GIS software deployment (including some powerful software extensions), delivery of an ArcView 3.2a training CD to all field offices, and training in the use of the Garmin Map76 GPS unit.

We also intend to complete CST implementation and training (for remaining field offices) and anticipate the continued development and delivery of NASIS and SSURGO projects and publishing of the most current NRI data that reflect the status, condition, and trends of our soil, water, and related resources. Also, Ohio NRCS personnel are assisting and participating in a statewide GIS conference for agriculture/natural resources professionals scheduled for March 24-26, 2003. The conference is designed to help meet our agencies' GIS training needs by having presentations and workshops for non-GIS professionals.

Ohio NRCS is committed to the application of geospatial technologies for improved natural resources planning and management. This commitment is demonstrated not only by our accomplishments, but our future plans. The implementation and adoption of geospatial technologies is a journey not a destination.

Waterfowl Habitat Created With Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

By Tom Edwards, NRCS

Anthony Jones, a nontraditional cooperator in Delaware County, contacted the local agricultural service center soon after buying a 20-acre parcel on the west side of the county in late 1998. Mr. Jones was interested in developing his new land for private hunting, especially waterfowl. He had contacted the ODNR Division of Wildlife Private Lands Biologist, Dan Crusey, who referred him to NRCS.

Tom Edwards, NRCS District Conservationist in Delaware, met with Mr. Jones in early February 1999 and helped him develop a wetland and upland prairie grassland planting for the cropland part of the property. We decided to use the WHIP to implement his resource management system plan. The application was on its way by the end of the month.

This low lying area was excavated and diked to create a wetland for waterfowl habitat. Photo by: Julia Hinders, NRCS

Anthony's application was approved on April 1, 1999. Field survey work was started along with the preparation of the contractional documents. Two shallow water areas were designed utilizing the natural terrain and site features. The larger wetland is split with a brushy fencerow. Water depths in the larger wetland vary between less than 6 inches up a 4-foot depth.

Construction started late spring 1999. Earthen material removed from the wetland site was used to create some low mounds in an otherwise flat landscape. Old tile lines were removed and plugged as the planned levees were formed. Disturbed areas were planted with a wildlife forb mix along with nearby field of warm season grasses. All work was officially completed by early fall.

Mr. Jones was pleased with the final project. Later, he constructed a duck blind and nest boxes around the area at his own expense.

Charles Loggins (center) stands next to a duck nest box in upland habitat planted with natural grasses and forbs. Tom Edwards stands in the background at left. Photo by: Julia Hinders, NRCS

Dam Rehabilitation Gives Hocking College Students Hands-On Experience

By Deba Mohler, NRCS

Construction began on one of Ohio's pilot flood control dam rehabilitation projects, Margaret Creek Structure No. 2, on November 18, 2002. The lake, locally known as Lake Snowden, is owned by Hocking College and used for recreational and academic purposes. Recently, the college built a fish hatchery below the dam for use in their aquaculture courses. Due to changes in Ohio law, Lake Snowden has been reclassified as a high hazard structure. To bring the dam into compliance with Ohio's State dam law, the dam's height will be increased and the spillway enlarged.

Hocking College is meeting their local 35 percent match by performing part of the construction utilizing their heavy equipment class. This class is part of their Environmental Restoration Associate Degree program. Hocking College is the only technical college in Ohio that offers this degree with a strong emphasis on heavy equipment operation. This course of study was developed to help retrain miners displaced when the coal mining industry shut down in the Appalachian region.

Ohio NRCS staff has worked with the college administrative staff and the course instructors through all planning phases of this pilot project. NRCS engineering staff will be assisting in the classroom by showing students how the rehabilitation alternatives were selected; by examining the project's engineering plans; and by reviewing the construction quality control requirements. The students will then have a hands-on opportunity to work with NRCS Construction Inspectors during construction.

Ohio NRCS staff has worked with the college through all planning phases of this pilot project.

Your project contact is Deba Mohler, NRCS Resource Conservationist. She can be reached at (614) 255-2465 or deba.mohler@oh.nrcs.usda.gov.

Hocking College students widen the emergency spillway of the flood control dam at Lake Snowden. Photo by: Scott Jerrome, NRCS

Franklin SWCD's Soil Tunnel

By Linda Pettit and Nora Hiland, Franklin SWCD

The Franklin SWCD's portable Soil Tunnel has been seen by 4,400 students of all ages. Photo by: Linda Pettit, Franklin SWCD

The Franklin SWCD obtained a grant from the Ohio Environmental Education Fund to develop a portable soil tunnel. The tunnel provides an underground view of soil, including different soil types, soil horizons, plant roots, and animal homes. The goal of this project was to provide soil information and education for countywide events. The soil tunnel debuted at the Rose Festival sponsored by Columbus Recreation and Parks in June 2002. Since then, it has been displayed at the Franklin County Fair, Youth Soil Day at Highbanks Metro Park, Farm Science Review, Riverfest sponsored by Friends of Alum Creek, Fall Harvest Jamboree at Smith Farms, Darby Days at Battelle-Darby Creek Metro Park, Earth Science Day at Highbanks Metro Park, and the Insect Fair at the Zoo.

The soil tunnel has also proven to be a valuable educational tool in the local schools. It has been used for programs for grades 1- college at 20 different schools including Columbus State Community College, Westerville High School, and 13 of Westerville's 16 elementary schools. The tunnel is accessible to people of all ages, either walking or in wheelchairs. It has always been well received and, hopefully, all of the 4,400 students and 1,000 other participants have left with a better understanding of the importance and complexity of the soil under our feet.

Clark SWCD is Wild on Wildflowers

By Kim Farr, NRCS

Wildflowers are planted to beautify Ohio roads. Photo by: Kim Farr, NRCS

In anticipation of the 2003 Ohio Bicentennial, Clark Soil and Water Conservation District teamed up with Pam Bennett of the OSU Extension and interested citizen, Dale Henry, to establish the Clark County Prairie Partners. The "WOW" (Wild On Wildflowers) project was started in 2000 with emphasis on planting wildflower plots at the interchanges along I-70 on the south side of Springfield. The intent was to enhance the beauty of the interchanges with flowers in full bloom during the summer of the bicentennial year. Letters were sent to businesses, city, county, and township governments, as well as service organizations requesting donations. Donations were also solicited by publications appearing in the *Springfield News-Sun.* Todate, $13,285 has been received for land preparation, seeding, and maintenance of the plots. This amount does not include materials and supplies donated by area businesses. Several positive comments have been received on the plots that bloomed last summer. When traveling through Clark County next summer, look for our contribution to the "Ohio Bicentennial."

Outstanding Conservationists

By John Crumrine, NRCS

For years, Jerry and Darlene Showman have worked to conserve the soil and water resources on the more than 400 acres that they farm. They farm in Bloom Township north of Bloomville and south of US-224, within the Honey Creek Watershed.

They began by constructing waterways in many of their highly erodible fields (HEL). While the district and NRCS provided some technical help, nearly two miles of waterways were installed at their own time and expense. An earth-moving pan owned by neighbor, Steve Lawson, was used during construction, and once seeded, the results met or exceeded all NRCS engineering specifications. Continued maintenance of the waterways has kept them in a condition to accommodate storm runoff without gullies reforming.

With nearly 200 acres of HEL, they have always sought ways to minimize sheet and rill erosion. No-till, mulch till, and wheat in the crop rotation did a good job of this. More recently, however, Jerry tried fall strip tillage prior to planting corn and this has been quite successful. For the past 3 years, Jerry and Darlene have found that their strip till corn has more uniform stands, lodges less, stays greener longer, and produces more corn!

Jerry and Darlene have also been participants in the Lake Erie Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. They have installed 4.4 acres of filter strips on floodplain soils along Honey Creek and 3.8 acres of filter strips around wetlands and along ditches where they farm.

About 2 years ago, they also enrolled within the Honey Creek Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). Here they agreed to adopt nutrient management practices that would lower the amount of nitrogen applied to corn by 20 pounds per acre. They also agreed to a change in their herbicide program where there would be at least a 25 percent reduction in the use of either Atrazine, Bladex, Princep, Lasso, or Dual. Certified Crop Advisor Don Waldock of United Agricultural Products assisted the Showman's with these changes.

All these practices combined make the Showman operation a "showcase" for conservation. Jerry and Darlene can take a lot of pride in the work they have done to curb erosion and improve water quality. Congratulations to both of them!

Riffle Structures Planned on Blanchard River

By Bill Zacharias, NRCS

This photograph of Findlay, Ohio's Blanchard River with Main Street shown in the background will have a new look if all goes according to plan. Channel improvement construction should start in June 2003. This will be the site of one of four riffle structures, this one with a 4.5' concrete core.

This Blanchard River site in Findlay, Ohio, will have a concrete core, riffle structure. Photo by: Bill Zacharias, NRCS

Plans are being finalized even if the plan has to go on the shelf until landrights and funding issues are resolved. The channel improvement plan calls for four riffle structures to improve fish habitat and simultaneously add aesthetic appeal for the people of the city of Findlay. The plan will also help reduce flooding by widening the channel, providing increased capacity.

Ohio's Farm Bill Forum

By Tomika Walker, NRCS

The United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service is pleased to present the first conference designed to provide Farm Bill information to limited resource farmers, beginning farmers, and newly established farmer cooperatives. This conference will be entitled, "Ohio's Farm Bill Forum." This informative day long session is scheduled for March 22, 2003, at the Clinton County USDA Service Center, in Wilmington, Ohio.

The conference will highlight changes and new provisions in the 2002 Farm Bill and acquaint current and potential USDA customers with a wide array of financial and technical assistance available to them. Participants will learn about local soil and water conservation district boards; how they educate and help local citizens conserve land, water, forests, wildlife and other natural resources; how they influence lawmakers; and how you can become involved. The afternoon will consist of a tour at Wilmington College. Learn about different grazing and watering systems for beef cattle, sheep, and goats. For those of you who are interested in horse, you will be able to tour their equine center.

Registration is $10, which includes a continental breakfast and lunch.

For more information contact Tomika Walker at (614) 255-2496 or email Tomika at tomika.walker@oh.usda.gov

Personnel Actions

Promotions

Cory Hohman, Civil Engineering Technician, GS-4, Tiffin, promoted to Civil Engineering Technician, GS-5, Tiffin, eff. 10/20/02.

Paul Jenny, Soil Scientist, GS-11, Newark, promoted to Supervisory Soil Scientist, GS-12, Newark, eff. 11/03/02.

Michael Hammitt, Civil Engineering Technician, GS-10, State Office, promoted to Civil Engineering Technician, GS-11, State Office, eff. 11/03/02.

Alberta Owensby, Human Resources Assistant, GS-6, State Office, promoted to Human Resources Assistant, GS-7, State Office, eff. 11/03/02.

David Libben, District Conservationist, GS-11, Urbana, promoted to District Conservationist, GS-12, Lancaster, eff. 12/01/02.

Reassignment

Barry Cavanna, ASTC-FO NE, GS-13, Wooster, reassigned to ASTC-FO Area 2, GS-13, Medina, eff. 10/20/02.

Douglas Zehner, Natural Resource Manager, GS-13, Technology Staff, State Office, reassigned to ASTC for Operations, GS-13, STC Staff, State Office, eff. 12/01/02.

Paul DeArman, ASTC for Technology, GS-13, State Office, reassigned to State Resource Conservationist, GS-13, STC Staff, State Office, eff. 12/01/02.

Realignment

Arthur Brate, State Conservation Engineer, GS-13, Technology Staff, State Office, realigned to State Conservation Engineer, GS-13, STC Staff, State Office, eff. 11/17/02.

Jonathan Gerken, State Soil Scientist, GS-13, Technology Staff, State Office, realigned to State Soil Scientist, GS-13, STC Staff, State Office, eff. 11/17/02.

New Hires

James Edwards, Geologist, GS-7, State Office, eff. 10/20/02.

Tadd Henson, Civil Engineer, GS-12, State Office, eff. 12/01/02.

Transfer to Ohio

Joyce Swartzendruber, Assistant State Conservationist, GS-13, Boise, ID, transferred to Deputy State Conservationist, GS-14, State Office, eff. 10/20/02.

Temporary Appointment (Not-to-Exceed 2-years) (USDA Career Intern Program)

Debbie Berger, Natural Resources Specialist, GS-9, Wooster, eff. 10/06/02.

Clinton Finney, Soil Conservation Technician, GS-6, Hopedale, eff. 10/06/02.

Return To Duty

Rebecca Lowry, Student Trainee, GS-4, Mt. Vernon, eff. 12/15/02.

Resignation

Clinton Finney, Student Trainee, GS-4, Hopedale, eff. 10/04/02.

LWOP (Not To Exceed)

Rebecca Lowry, Student Trainee, GS-4, Mt. Vernon, eff. 12/29/02.